



## **Appropriations Committee**

### **State Contracting Standards Board Hearing 2/17/22**

Good evening Chairwoman Osten, Chairwoman Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jody Barr and I serve as the Executive Director of AFSCME Council 4 which represents 30,000 public and private employees across Connecticut. I am submitting testimony regarding funding for the State Contracting Standards Board.

The State Contracting Standards Board is a vital tool for stopping reckless privatization and safeguarding taxpayer resources. However, we have seen it understaffed and underfunded for years as contracting out occurs and the Board restricted from fully performing its duties. At Council 4, we have seen state work privatized in multiple areas. We've seen it in the DMV, which is a vital revenue stream for the state, and work outsourced from state employees. During the pandemic, our Department of Labor members had their work outsourced without any oversight by the State Contracting Standards Board. They did not have an ability to review if these contracts would reduce costs or maintain the quality of vital services being provided to the public. Instead, public work was outsourced to Maximus and Robert Half and the public's sensitive information was handed over to private companies.

In last year's budget, the Board received an appropriation that would allow it to fill its five positions – Chief Procurement Officer, Staff Attorney, Accounts Examiner, Research Analyst, and Trainer. This would allow the Board to fully oversee state contracting and have control over the contracts so that they are cost effective and provide efficiencies. However, this funding was cut, and the Board has continued to operate with one employee. Despite this, the Board has still been able to find savings with their volunteer efforts. Fully staffing this agency will only improve on these savings and their ability to oversee state contracting.

We ask that the Appropriations Committee restore funding for the Board so that these positions can be filled and oversight can be improved. Even short staffed, the Board has done important work to find savings. Recently, in 2018, the Board issued a report detailing potential savings of \$174 to \$264 million in cost savings annually if the State were to mandate competitive bidding for all POS and PSA contracts. This is just one example of the great work the State Contracting Standards Board has undertaken.

Thank you for your consideration and I am happy to talk with members of the committee.